

**Wellbeing Award for Schools Case Study**

**School name:** Lessness Heath Primary School

**Location:** Belvedere, Kent

**Brief summary of your school:**

Lessness Heath is a 3-form entry primary school, set within a diverse community of various cultures. The demographic make-up consists of second and third generations of families experiencing deprivation and depression, 21% of pupils have free school meals. In December 2017 the school was awarded “Good” by Ofsted, with outstanding features in personal and social development. The school values its partnership of work with parents and offers a variety of parent interactive workshops. Over the years Lessness Heath has grown strong positive links with outside agencies and services, resulting in quality referrals being accepted by widely stretched services. The pupils in our school are described as “happy and engaged with their learning”, aspirations are high, even in life’s adversities. The children feel liked and cared for in our school.

**Why did your school decide to take the Wellbeing Award for Schools (WAS)?**

Lessness Heath decided to undertake the Wellbeing Award for Schools to raise the importance of supporting and protecting mental health and wellbeing of the whole school community. It was a chance to showcase our visions and hard work that had been implemented to ensure our children feel secure and therefore able to strive. This was a chance to share our good practices and provision for pupil wellbeing and release the stigma around mental health. We felt empowered to learn more about how we could enhance our knowledge and practice further.

**What particular issue(s) did the WAS help you to identify?**

The WAS process helped us to identify that staff wellbeing wasn’t a high priority focus. Results from a staff wellbeing audit showed that staff had thoughts and feelings around their own wellbeing, being neglected due to demands in the role. It was also clear that a small percentage of stakeholders were even considering coming out of the profession completely due to a lack of ability in protecting their own mental health.

We also gained a greater understanding into the importance of releasing stigma around mental health, for the whole school community. It also highlighted a lack of knowledge and confidence around recognising and responding to mental health issues. Our biggest learning was to recognise that wellbeing can look very different for individuals and prescriptions for wellbeing are uniquely grown.

**What changes did you make as a result of this?**

* We have visuals around the school environment to support mental health and wellbeing for all our pupils.
* CPD is delivered termly with a focus of mental health and wellbeing.
* Staff now have a wellbeing notice board and a wellbeing menu of events and activities.
* 24 wellbeing ambassadors have been employed and are delivering up to date information and guidance around the importance of protecting our wellbeing and mental health. Roles have been created for the pupils such as, events organising and charity project leaders.
* We created a change team of stakeholders throughout the whole-school community, who drove the vision and strategy of positive mental health and wellbeing, for everyone in the school community.
* Staff are offered regular supervision to support wellbeing.
* The school offered a wellbeing menu for staff with social prescription to enhance wellbeing in the workplace.
* Anti-stigma awareness training and workshops were held for all pupils, staff and parents to highlight the importance of positive mental health.
* The Wellbeing Leader recruited Wellbeing Ambassadors from across the school to learn and champion the schools vision of a holistic setting.
* The school developed a bespoke family empowerment program to support families, ensuring wellbeing was being embedded into the pupils’ homes.
* Staff and pupils have yearly emotional health screening, that becomes part of proactively identifying needs and creates plans for future strategies.
* We have created a 4-tiered approach in supporting pupil’s emotional needs through intervention.
* Staff perks are being introduced in the form of shared lunches and breakfasts to build on connecting relationships.
* Staff rewards and celebration on a half termly basis.
* Up-to-date mental health awareness training is given to all staff annually.
* Our whole school follows the five ways to wellbeing, which includes a diet of ***learning,*** ***giving, taking notice, connecting*** and **being active.**
* Mindfulness and Yoga has been introduced to the whole-school community and is becoming part of the weekly curriculum.
* Lessness Heath has created a wellbeing policy for staff and for pupils.

**What impact did this have?**

As a result of our wellbeing focus this year we have noticed that staff are presenting as being happier and have seen a decrease in staff absences. The pupils are happy and engaged and are now able to recognise their thoughts and feelings and are able to ask for help.

Teachers are able to recognise symptoms and triggers of emotional health issues within their classrooms and are more confident in signposting pupils and their families for support and intervention. There is a sense of togetherness and staff report that they feel their thoughts and feelings are taken into account. Staff voiced that there is more of a community spirit and unity amongst staff. The way that staff and pupils communicate to each other is framed in a much more positive way and this is having a lasting impact on the way that children are speaking to each other. Staff are using their newly found skills to respond to adversity in a calm approachable manner. Staff are able to help the pupils become more aware and mindful of the importance of respect and empathy.

The whole-school community feels a sense of pride around how we put wellbeing at the heart of our school.

**Staff voices**

*‘I have learnt to be a more reflective practitioner and am more mindful of my own wellbeing and that it is ok to share on this. I connect with my colleagues more’*

*‘I have used different strategies to keep myself happy and now realise that criticisms are not personal, I am able to reflect on them and learn from them, rather than to take them personally. I have grown in my self-belief’*

*‘I have realised that staff wellbeing is a unique process, wellbeing can look very different for individuals, some people want to look at their emotional needs and this can have a positive impact and others find it overwhelming and struggle to keep the work personal life separation when reflecting on this’*

*‘I have been able to take on board lots of tools that we have given children and use them in my own life. In particular mindfulness and being aware of how I am feeling and how I can change that, this is having a positive impact on my leading capacity and has enhanced my personal life’*

**Since achieving the Award, what direct impact(s) has the WAS had on developing parent partnerships and pupil achievement?**

Parents feel supported and listened to. The family matters empowerment programme for parents is having a lasting positive impact on family lives. We have engaged disaffected families. Parents are now being upskilled to respond appropriately to mental health concerns and now understand the importance of positive wellbeing. Parents are being taught ways to look after theirs and their families’ wellbeing in the same cohesive ways as the pupils are being taught. Wellbeing is constantly being embedded through a thread of work through the whole school. The WAS process has highlighted pupil’s skills, the pupils report back that they have gained a sense of achievement and that they are feeling good about themselves. We are noticing that the children are becoming more resilient and are able to regulate their emotions.

**What are your next steps?**

Lessness Heath has developed a strategy for 2018/2019 that protects and provides excellent provision for wellbeing and mental health for all stakeholders in our school community. Our vision will continue to be embedded and is part of our school development plan and school priorities. We are currently in talks with the Anna Freud Centre around a partnership of work and have signed up to various research projects for children’s mental health. We have made it a priority to keep up to date with research around the developments in understanding and supporting wellbeing and mental health of young people and adults, therefore committing to holding whole school annual training around mental health, this will include annual wellbeing screening of our pupils and staff.

**Lastly, how would you describe the whole experience from start to finish and achieving the award?**

The process was quite daunting at first and there were times where I felt that the award was unachievable, within the daily demands of my usual role, however over time and with the help of the Awards Support Team at Optimus, I was able to get my head around the process and she was always at the end of the phone or email to help.

In order to steer the process forward and make a lasting impact, it is vital for the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team to buy into this project. As a school we were in a strong position to have leaders whom understand the importance of creating an excellent wellbeing provision and share my passion and vision in the importance of safeguarding all stakeholders’ wellbeing and mental health.

We found some of the explanations of required documents for KPIs, confusing and felt that a final process of being able to redo the stakeholder evaluations helpful, in terms of impact. When we completed the stakeholder evaluations it was very challenging to send these out due to their being a few issues with the online process. Our pupils reported back that they found the questions on the pupil evaluations were challenging to understand, maybe a more child friendly approach would be helpful, it was the same challenge for parents with learning needs.

At times it was a struggle to engage all parties into the vision, however over time this was less of an issue when people could see the benefits of our wellbeing focus. Working groups grew overtime, we now even have our local community police officer that has joined our Change Team.

Towards the end of the process we had gained momentum in our plans and actions, it was apparent the whole school was on board to driving the project forward and there was a real sense of unity, which in turn raised people’s happiness within school.

I think it is really important to buy in as many advisor days as you can, as we found these invaluable, they provided us with a deeper learning experience and relieved us of any anxieties around steering the project, in the right direction.

We are delighted to be the first school to receive the Wellbeing Award for Schools and look forward to having our celebration day, this commends the hard work and commitment of our whole school community. It is our continued drive to provide, an excellent provision, for wellbeing and mental health.